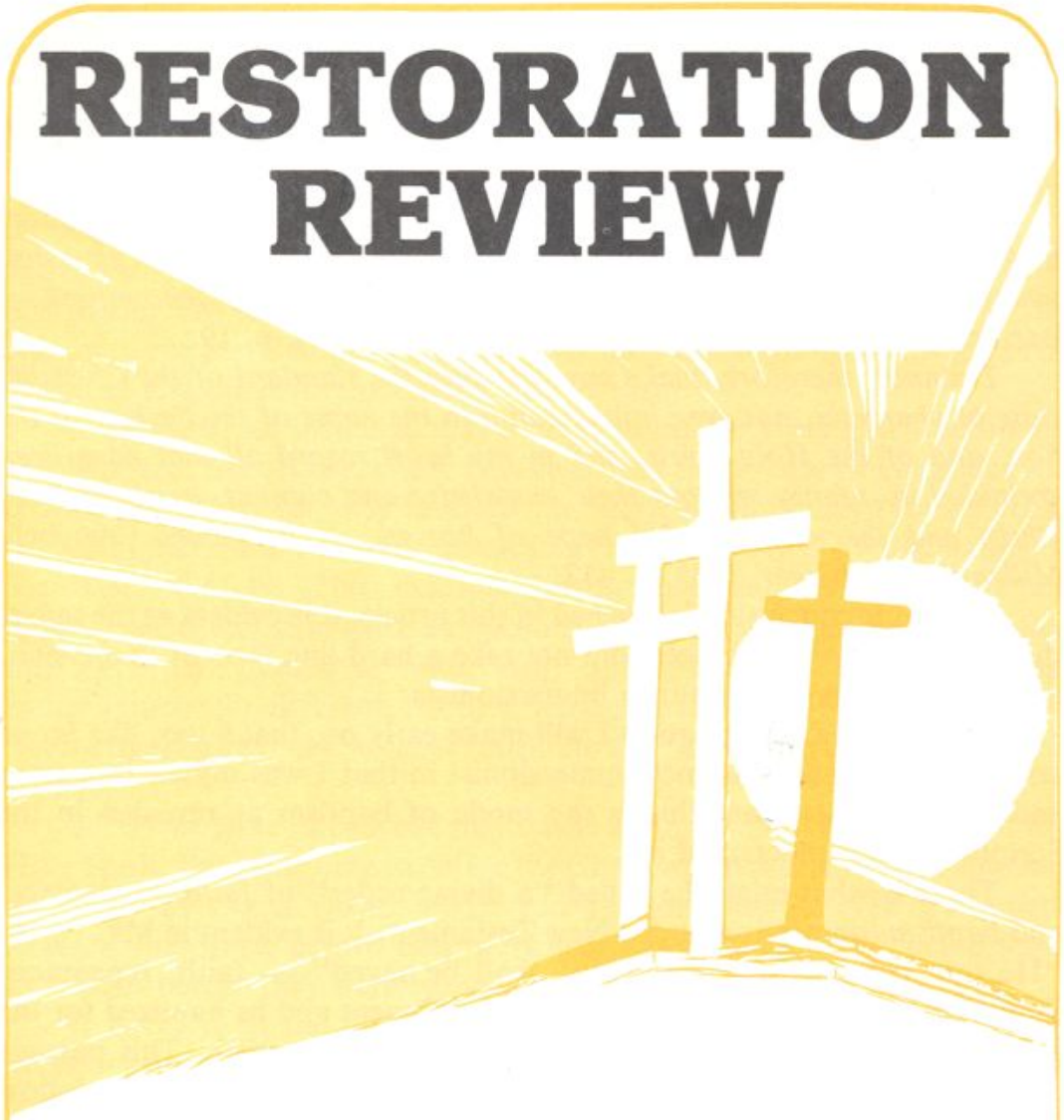
RESTORATION REVIEW



It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who, in the midst of the crowd, keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. — *Abraham Lincoln*

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Adventures of the Early Church …

BAPTISM BY IMMERSION: A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP?

My opinion is that immersion only is baptism. But shall I therefore make my opinion a term of Christian fellowship? If in this case I thus act, where shall I cease from making my opinions terms of fellowship? Barton W. Stone, *Christian Messenger,* Vol. 5 (1831), p. 19.

I cannot, therefore, make anyone duty the standard of the Christian state or character, not even immersion into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and in my heart regard all that have been sprinkled in infancy without their knowledge and consent, as aliens from Christ and the well-grounded hope of heaven. - Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger,* 1837, p. 412.

Whatever conclusion is reached in this article, it is evident at the outset that our two leading pioneers did not take a hard-line view of immersion, even though they were staunch immersionists.

And this is an affirmation I will make early on, that I too, like Stone and Campbell, am a staunch immersionist in that I was myself immersed and I teach others that this is the mode of baptism as revealed in the Scriptures, as I understand it.

There is what might be called "a divine order" of *faith, repentance,* and *baptism* (immersion) in the New Testament. It is evident in Mk. 16:16: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" —faith, repentance (implied), and baptism. And in acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins" —faith (implied), repentance, baptism. This passage further reveals that remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit follow baptism. And so the "order" could be made to read: faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This conclusion is supported by numerous passages, such as Acts 18:8 "Many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized," the story of the eunuch in Acts 8, who when he became a believer was baptized, the going down into the water implying immersion (verse 38), and Acts 22:16, which may be the most persuasive reference of all: "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name." The order in the case of Paul's response was faith, repentance, baptism, which we may conclude was by immersion, especially in the light of Rom. 6:4, where he includes his own experience: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death."

The “order” or “plan” that our people have pointed to since the time of Walter Scott, *faith, repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, Holy Spirit,* can be defended as *usually* the way it is in Scripture. But this may be one reason why many of us have been dogmatic on this subject when the likes of Stone and Campbell were not. We have taken the *usual* instances of Scripture and made an unbending rule of them.

It appears, for instance, that Paul received the Holy Spirit *before* he was baptized. See Acts 9:17-19. It is clear that in the case of Cornelius the order is different, for they received the Spirit so gloriously (before being baptized) that there was some question as to whether they needed baptism. See Acts 10:47-48. This example is an important testimonial to the significance of baptism since an apostle goes on to *command* baptism. But still the order changes to faith, Holy Spirit, baptism. The case of the Samaritans is still different, for they believed and were baptized but did not receive the Spirit, not at least until further apostolic action. See Acts 8:14-17.

Surely we have to concede that one is a Christian if he has received the Holy Spirit. Paul is willing to define the Christian on this basis, one who has the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9). And yet some in the New Testament received the Spirit before they were baptized, which would make them Christians before they were baptized.

It is risky, in the light of Scripture, to make immersion absolutely necessary to becoming a Christian. We can contend with good reason that believers were *usually* immersed and then received the gift of the Holy Spirit, but we must allow for exceptions. It should be enough to urge people to become Christians in the manner *usually* set forth in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Acts. We can grant that there are exceptions while contending for “the usual order.”

With this more balanced view we, too, can glory in the salvation of the thief on the cross, and we don’t have to argue with the Baptists that he may have already been baptized (as I was taught back in my college days) or that he did not have to be since he lived before Christ died on the cross and the beginning of the New Covenant.

Why can’t we just admit - gloriously! - that *of course* the thief was saved without baptism and died a Christian unimmersed? His Was not the usual way one became a disciple (or Christian) even before Christ died on the cross. John the Baptist had preached baptism (immersion) unto repentance for the remission of sins (see Mk. 1:4), and he and

his disciples, as well as the disciples of Jesus, were continually baptizing *before* Jesus died on the cross (Jn. 4:1-2). Those who became believers were baptized of John's baptism, and those who rejected that baptism rejected the will of God, according to Lk. 7:29-30.

Ordinarily a believer like the thief would have been baptized, like all the others, but he couldn't be baptized. He was nailed to a cross! But still he became a Christian and died a Christian.

So, if our friends point to the thief as an excuse for not being baptized, we can assure them that God is a God of love and mercy who does not expect anyone to do what is impossible, and that if they are nailed to a cross God does not expect them to be baptized, just as with the thief. But we can implore them to follow the "usual" course of becoming a Christian. Ordinarily sinners are not nailed to a cross and are free to make a faithful response to baptism. But if they are somehow confined and cannot be baptized, then of course the Lord does not expect it.

We must be cautious about drawing hard and fast lines as to precisely when one becomes a Christian. The safest definition of a Christian seems to be *a follower of Christ,* which would make *disciple of Christ* and *Christian* synonymous, which I believe to be the teaching of Scripture. Nor can we say there were no Christians until Pentecost, for wherever you have a disciple of Christ, one determined to take up his cross and follow Jesus (Lk. 9:23), you have a Christian.

The twelve apostles could say to Jesus "We have left all and followed you" (Lk. 18:28), which is as good a definition for a disciple of Christ or a Christian as you will find. By the way, do we *know* those twelve apostles were ever baptized (immersed)? It might be one's opinion, a *good* opinion, that they were baptized of John's baptism, but we can't prove it. But we do know that those who became followers of Christ, even before Pentecost, were *usually* baptized. But not always. The apostles, due to their special call, may not have been. Since we don't know we should avoid being dogmatists on the relationship between discipleship and baptism. Again, it should be enough to show that Christians or disciples, whether before or after Pentecost, were *usually* baptized.

But now you may ask whether they became Christians before or after baptism. Do we have to draw the line that hard and fast? It is enough to say that sinners became disciples of Christ by believing, repenting, and being baptized —in that order —usually!

Going back to the founding fathers of the Stone-Campbell Movement, it is apparent that they were aware of the problems I have raised, and so they were reluctant to make immersion absolutely essential to being a Christian and to being accepted into Christian fellowship.

Notice how they defined a Christian:

Barton W. Stone: "Let us still acknowledge all to be our brethren, who believe in the Lord Jesus, and humbly and honestly obey him, as far as they know his will, and their duty." *(Chris. Mess.,* Vol. 5 (1831), p. 21).

Alexander Campbell: "Who is a Christian? I answer, Everyone that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins, and obeys him in all things according to his measure of' knowledge of his will." *(Mill. Harb.,* 1837, p. 411).

Even though these two men championed the doctrine of baptism by immersion for remission of sins, they stopped short of including it as an absolute in their definition of a Christian. Yet they immersed their thousands and tens of thousands. While Stone never preached baptism as an absolute, he could nonetheless say that "There is not one in 500 among us who has not been immersed." While Campbell was sprinkled a Presbyterian and considered himself a Christian all the years of his youth before he was immersed, he nonetheless, when he was convinced that baptism should be by immersion, submitted to that ordinance at about age 25.

I am convinced that our position today should be what theirs was then, for this reflects the balance that we find in Scripture. We ourselves should submit to baptism by immersion and urge this upon others as the apostolic way of becoming a Christian, as we understand it. But we must realize that all through the centuries there has been much confusion and misunderstanding on this subject. You will observe that Stone, in the opening quotation, accepted his position on baptism as an opinion. We may make baptism itself a matter of faith for all, but the church has been so divided over the design and mode of baptism that we would do well to follow Stone and accept our position as our opinion or our interpretation, and thus recognize that devout, intelligent Christians differ with us.

This means that we should not make our understanding of baptism a test of fellowship or church membership. We should not because the New Testament does not. Nor did the early church. While immersion was almost certainly the practice in all the New Testament

churches (since they did not have the problem with this subject that we have had since apostolic times), it was not baptism that was the basis of their unity and fellowship. The basis of union was the Spirit of Christ, which was reflected in their devotion to Jesus as Lord.

In referring to one of the great promises Jesus would say to them, "You who have followed me …" (Mt. 19:28). This is the essence of being a Christian. *You who have followed me!* should be our only test of fellowship, or loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord. This is what Campbell was saying in seeing the Christian as one who believes in Christ and obeys him insofar as he understands.

The ideal of "leaving our nets and following Christ" will give us a loftier basis for fellowship than baptism, for we may well have churches full of folk who have been baptized who are *not* followers of Jesus Christ. As old Isaac Errett put it, another of our pioneers, let Christlikeness be the test.

This was the greatest adventure of all to the early church, to follow Jesus Christ as Lord. This was their confession and their only creed, *Jesus* is *Lord!* It was a confession that sometimes led to martyrdom. It stood in contrast to the cry of rejection sometimes heard from a Jewish synagogue, *Jesus* is *cursed!* (which in Corinth seemed to have been next door to where Christians met, Acts 18:7). Paul explains in 1 Cor. 12:3 that no one can utter such a disclaimer of faith by the Spirit of God, but if one sincerely proclaims that Jesus is Lord it means that he has the Holy Spirit.

This cannot of course be a mere profession of the lips, but when one is a loyal disciple and confesses, perhaps even at the pain of death, that Jesus is Lord, this confirms that he is a faithful Christian and that the Holy Spirit inspires his faith. This confession is referred to also in Rom. 10:9 where the apostle expresses certitude that anyone who confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes that God raised him from the dead will be saved. While this takes nothing away from the importance of baptism, it shows what they considered crucial. If there were exceptions to baptism, there was none to this grand confession of the early church.

When I meet one who loves Jesus Christ and is following him the best he knows how, allowing for the weaknesses of the flesh (an allowance we reserve for ourselves!), I have met a Christian or a disciple. I should accept him as such, including a place at our side at church as my brother in the Lord, unconditionally.

In our ongoing acceptance of each other, we will help each other to grow closer and closer to the Lord. We will share all truth together, compromising at no point, but neither of us will call for parity in understanding or obedience in our common walk in the Lord. If his obedience is imperfect, he will make it right as he grows in the Lord. I am to give him room and time and not be pushy. If I find myself overly concerned about the fact that he has not yet been immersed, I am to remember that it is loyalty to Christ, in reference to where one is at any given point, that is the essence of being a Christian, and not immersion. And I should remember that while I may be thinking of the norm in reference to baptism, that even in the New Testament there are exceptions, as we have seen. I cannot therefore afford to conclude that only the immersed have received the Spirit of Christ.

If we have this more workable, more reasonable, more balanced, more scriptural, and certainly less sectarian and less legalistic view of baptism by immersion, we are likely to immerse more people, not fewer. It seemed to have worked that way with Barton Stone. But most of all we will be more Christian and we will have a position that will make possible an effective plea for the unity of all believers in Christ. —*the Editor*

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THE MAN WHO BAPTIZED HIMSELF

They call it se-baptism, self-baptism, though it is almost never practiced. It is common in history for those who decide to be baptized, particularly immersed, to have some problem in finding someone to baptize them, but they almost never resolve the problem by baptizing themselves. It seems to be generally assumed that baptism is something that is done to us rather than something we do to ourselves. But we cannot help but be impressed when we find someone who is so eager to submit to this ordinance that he would serve as both administrator and subject at his own baptism, especially when he was apparently unable to find someone to assist him. History is so studded with the unusual that we have at least one rather significant instance of se-baptism.

In our own history in the Stone-Campbell Movement we have instances of where our forebears might have at least considered se-baptism. One of our pioneers, Samuel Rogers, tells in his autobiography of a little girl who wanted to be baptized after hearing him preach the gospel in her community, but by the time she made this decision Rogers had already moved on. The girl sought someone to baptize her according to the primitive gospel, but no one was to be found. Even her own father refused, supposing he was not qualified to perform such a sacred rite. Even after she fell deathly ill she still longed for

someone to baptize her. At last the family "negro mammy," as they were called in those days, agreed to immerse her. Rogers responded to her plea only in time to conduct her funeral, and he tells us that the littler girl's faith had a profound impact upon the community.

We may hope that those of us among Churches of Christ-Christian Churches, who have championed the place of baptism in the scheme of redemption all these years, no longer have doubt about the salvation of such ones as that little girl, whether she at last found someone to baptize her or not. The God of heaven never requires of anyone what is impossible for her to do. I also presume that we would not have blamed her if she had at last decided to baptize herself. It is noteworthy that throughout the history of the church, both in and out of the Scriptures, those who seek baptism never consider baptizing themselves. Except for that one case back in the 17th century that I am going to tell you about.

But in passing I might reveal to you that I once practiced se-baptism. Some years back on a visit to the Mid-East there were three bodies of water with which I sought a special fellowship, and being alone I could do any fool thing I pleased. I insisted on bathing in the Mediterranean (at Beirut), floating on my back, with clothes, shoes and all on the Dead Sea (near Qumran), and being "baptized" in the Jordan (where John the Baptist baptized). I did all three, the latter being se-baptism, though it was not really baptism. I had already been baptized into Christ at the hands of another. This se-baptism was a baptism into the Jordan. It had only semi-spiritual significance. It was just something I wanted to do.

Now tell me, how many editors do you know who have been baptized in the Jordan? Well, it is no big deal, just one of those things. That was 25 years ago and I think this is the first time I've told it. I am telling it now so as to say I have some understanding of se-baptism and sympathy for the one person in history who was baptized that way —and he for real.

We might well have had cases of se-baptism among our founding fathers who had difficulty getting themselves immersed after the ancient order once they broke from their respective sects. Alexander Campbell persuaded a Baptist minister to immerse him, not after Baptist order but simply upon his profession of faith in Christ. It was with reluctance that Mathias Luce agreed to do this, but at the appointed time he not only baptized Alexander Campbell but Thomas Campbell as well, along with several others.

A few years earlier Barton W. Stone and his fellow Presbyterians (or former Presbyterians) had more difficulty finding someone to immerse them. The Baptists would do it only if they became Baptists. Concluding that the one who baptizes does not necessarily himself have to be an immersed believer, they proceeded to immerse each other.

There is drama in such a scene, former Presbyterian ministers who were now resolved to be simply Christians immersing each other. And that is how our history started, preachers who had only been sprinkled immersing each other after the New Testament order, as they came to see it. I am going to guess that se-baptism never occurred to them.

With the Baptists, who have practiced immersion longer than we have, history takes a different turn. When they trace themselves back to their beginnings (excluding John the Baptist!) they come to a delightful character who was resolved to be immersed like the Bible teaches, but finding no one he considered qualified to serve as administrator he proceeded to immerse himself, which is one way to have the perfect administrator. It is a wonder that it has not been practiced more!

May I introduce to you our brother in the Lord, John Smyth of Amsterdam, Holland, who in about 1600 went to prison in England for his faith. He is a brother of no mean background. Educated at Cambridge, he had promise of a glorious ministry in the Anglican Church, the state church of England. He first opposed the dissidents, such as the Puritans who separated themselves from the state church, like John Bunyan, who also went to prison for his faith, from which he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* (thank God for prisons!). After studying the sentiments of Separatists for almost a year, Smyth cast his lot with them, which led to his own imprisonment. In England at that time it was against the law to preach the gospel except by the authority of the Anglican Church. The Separatists were terribly persecuted, causing some of them to seek refuge in "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Released from prison, Smyth made his way to Amsterdam, a haven for those who sought religious freedom. He joined the English Separatist Church, which repudiated the authority of the Anglican Church but continued to practice infant baptism. Like our own pioneers, Smyth came to believe that baptism is only for believers, and when he published a repudiation of infant baptism the English Separatist Church disfellowshipped him.

Smyth and thirty-six of his friends then formed a new church, one that would reject infant baptism and practice only believer's baptism. Finding themselves unbaptized by their own understanding of Scripture, they were in a strait. They could have had the Dutch Baptists to baptize them, but Smyth, who was now a typical "restorationist," some of which we have in the Stone-Campbell Movement, did not believe the Dutch Baptist was a true Church of Christ and so he would not accept their baptism.

In fact Smyth now believed that he had restored the only true Church of Christ on the earth. The true Churches of Christ had perished back through the centuries, and he believed that he had restored the true church after the apostolic order. He only needed to have a baptized church, and since there was no one to represent the true church in baptism, he baptized himself (apparently by immersion) and then baptized about forty others. This church in Amsterdam (1608) could serve as the first Baptist Church in history.

But if one reads the story of John Smyth in the *History of the Baptists* by that eminent historian Thomas Armitage, who also gives a delightful account of Alexander Campbell whom he warmly embraces as a Baptist, one might conclude that it was a Church of Christ and not a Baptist Church that Smyth organized. Here is part of what Armitage says:

> Smyth believed that the Apostolic Church model was lost, and determined on its recovery. He renounced the figment of a historical apostolic succession, insisting that where two or three organize according to the teachings of the New Testament, they form as true a Church of Christ as that of Jerusalem, though they stand alone in the earth. With the design of restoring this pattern, he baptized himself in Christ in 1608, then baptized Thomas Helwys with about forty others, and so formed a new Church in Amsterdam. In most things this body was Baptist, as that term is now used, with some differences.

Whether Smyth had a Baptist Church or a Church of Christ, Armitage describes Smyth as a typical restorationist with the usual costly fallacies and cruel aftermath of restorationism. He found all other churches false and their baptism invalid. He restored the true Church of Christ by following his own view of the New Testament pattern. Armitage, who believed his own Baptist denomination had restored the true church, found Smyth a true Baptist on "most things." But to a restorationist "most" is not good enough, for "the pattern" has to be followed in every detail.

This of course invites dissension and division, and restorationism seems always to end in division. Smyth's work was no exception. The Church of Christ (or Baptist Church) in Amsterdam soon divided, with Smyth going one way and Thomas Helwys the other.

It is to Smyth's credit that he at last decided that he had gone too far in supposing his group was the only true church and those he baptized the only true Christians. He even concluded that he had been too hasty in baptizing himself. He at last joined a Baptist group in Holland, becoming a bit more ecumenical, and some of his old church went with him. But Thomas Helwys and the true Church of Christ he left behind withdrew fellowship from him. Smyth died in 1612. The man who baptized himself learned a lot in the last few years of his life. He was willing to learn and to change. Such ones not only sometimes go to jail but sometimes get themselves disfellowshipped as well.

You may not have known about John Smyth, but doesn't his story sound familiar? That is because in the history of the church problems have a way of repeating themselves, and God's fallible children have a way of responding to them in similar ways. His story shows us that there is nothing new about restorationism and that se-baptism has a logical place in such an ism.

We can be surprised that in the impassioned struggle to create the one and only true church there has not been more se-baptism. We have rebaptism for various reasons, baptism in running water (in such an impressive source as the *Didache,* a second century Christian document), baptism only in a river, triune baptism (three times), "backward" and "forward" baptism, baptism in the nude, etc.

Se-baptism has one thing in particular going for it. It is the ideal way to start the perfect church. If we all baptized ourselves we would at least start "the true church" from point perfection.

It is a heartening lesson to learn from history that the only person who ever reached that conclusion changed his mind. I am one of his admirers. —*the Editor*

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To H. A. (Buster) Dobbs, *Editor, Firm Foundation:*

LETTER TO AN EDITOR

Your editorial in the 11 June *Firm Foundation* about instrumental music, particularly in reference to claims recently made by some of our brothers in the Christian Church, reminds me of how long we have discussed that issue without resolving it. It is unlikely that you and those to whom you are responding will see the matter alike. We have discussed it and debated it for over a century now, still to no avail.

It is the same with other issues of a similar nature, and we all seem to be on both the *pro* side and the *anti* side, depending on the issue. Our good brother across town from you at the Main St. Church of Christ in South Houston, the highly respected G. B. Shelburne, Jr. would make the same argument from the silence of the Scriptures in reference to the Sunday School that you make on instrumental music. As you said in your recent editorial, "We do not use mechanical means of making music in the worship of the church because the Bible is silent with reference to the practice!," he would say the same thing, inserting the Sunday School where you have instrumental music. That makes you the *pro* or the liberal and he the *anti.*

But then brother Shelburne becomes the liberal when it comes to a plurality of cups for Communion, for the anti-cups brethren will take your same proposition and argue that since the Bible is silent about cups they do not use them. On and on it goes. It is difficult to move so far to the right that there is not someone who will be more *anti* than yourself and thus oppose what you approve, and the argument is always the silence of the Bible.

Because of this impasse I think we would do well to examine this argument from silence. I suggest a different proposition: *that the Scriptures are silent on any given subject means only that the Scriptures are silent on that subject, and no other conclusion can be drawn.* Silence neither proves nor disproves anything. There is no such thing in either the law of God or man as "the authority of silence" or "the law of silence," terms our people sometimes resort to on the matter of biblical silence. How can a law be a law when it says nothing (silent)? How can we say that God enjoins his will upon his church in reference to instruments, literature, communion cups, Sunday Schools, etc. when he says nothing about these things in the Scriptures?

Do we not have to conclude that since no law can be imposed when the Bible is silent, we must leave it to each one or to each church to decide what disposition to make on such matters? In our church here in Denton we choose not to use the instrument, but can we not allow the Christian Church across town from us to make a different disposition and thus

use the instrument without violating the bounds of Christian fellowship? Can we not agree to disagree on such matters and go on and accept each other and work together as sisters and brothers in Christ ought?

Or must we go on forever separated, arguing and debating over an issue that can never be settled to everyone's satisfaction? May I submit to you that this was J. W. McGarvey's conclusion, even though he objected to the instrument as much as anyone in our history? Historian Earl West quotes him as saying, "I have never proposed to withdraw fellowship from brethren simply because of their use of instrumental music in the worship" *(The Search for the Ancient Order,* Vol. 2, p. 441).

Brother McGarvey would not have said this about something clearly enjoined in the Bible. While he interpreted "silence" one way, a position he strongly held, he nonetheless extended fellowship to those who differed with him.

Why can't McGarvey's attitude be our attitude in reference to instrumental music and our brothers in the Christian Church? Brother Shelburne is like brother McGarvey in this regard, for even though he interprets "silence" on the Sunday School differently from you, he does not make this a test of fellowship but accepts you nonetheless. Why can't we all be like McGarvey and Shelburne and go on fellowshipping each other despite these differences?

Now that I have read your 11 June editorial in reference to your disagreement with Lynn Hieronymous and Don DeWelt, I want to ask you if you cannot accept these men as your brothers in Christ and treat them as equals in the Lord in "the fellowship of the Spirit" despite these differences? As McGarvey would, even though he opposed the instrument as much as yourself. And as the apostle Paul would, who insisted that we should "Accept one another even as Christ has accepted you" (Rom. 15:7).

This is the real issue at stake. We can always debate such issues as instrumental music one more time, but it is utterly useless. But how you treat your brothers who differ with you in reference to acceptance and fellowship is as crucial as the unity of the Body of Christ itself.

Because of your influence among us your answer to this is more important than you might think. At stake is whether we move toward being a united people in Christ or whether we continue as a dividing and subdividing sect. Can we take the course McGarvey did or must we now deal with him as a "liberal" and arrange for some post-mortem withdrawal of fellowship from even him.

Sincerely,
Leroy Garrett

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A VISIT WITH A CENTENARIAN

I was at the Church of Christ rest home in Gunter, Texas visiting with my oldest brother, who is 83. There were eight of us children, and I am next to the youngest. Six of us are still on *this* side, five brothers and our only sister. One brother died on Christmas Eve, 1977, and another brother died last Christmas Day, which makes us reluctant to join Bing Crosby in wishing for a white (or non-white) Christmas. But oddly enough my three oldest brothers are surviving the younger ones.

After visiting with my brother *and* his wife, who share a room at this excellent facility, I went to another wing to sit with Tillet S. Teddlie, who was recently honored by Dallas Churches of Christ with a festive sing-song on his 100th birthday anniversary. More than 1500 of our folk sang for almost two hours, the songs being those written by brother Teddlie, who has published fourteen hymnals used widely by Churches of Christ through the years. For his age he is amazingly alert and his keen memory has not yet failed him. He recalled when I was but a boy making my first attempts at preaching in and around Dallas. We lived in the same neighborhood back in those days.

A Dallas TV station recently aired an interview with this 100-year old song writer, which included a solo or two of his favorite hymns (acappella!). With his songs as background music the program went on to picture numerous country churches. It was a beautiful tribute to a servant of the church.

Having led the singing in "gospel meetings," which we always called our revivals, for some 90 well-known Church of Christ preachers, Teddlie makes for interesting conversation for an old history buff like me. As I named names, he would share anecdotes, and if it were not for his age he might have shared some gossip. He was tempted a time or two, I think, but backed away. At 100 it is too late to gossip, which restricts preachers'

conversations rather severely! It is a blessing that brother Teddlie still hears well. I wear myself out shouting at people, and I don't like to shout. I often play dominoes with an octogenarian here in Denton, but it is mostly in silence. It is just as well that he does not hear for we strongly disagree in our theology, and he, if not I, likes to argue.

Brother Teddlie thinks Foy E. Wallace, Jr. was our greatest preacher, an orator who could plead for people's souls with such persuasion that it was difficult for a sinner to remain in his seat. He told of the day long ago when Wallace was starting a Church of Christ in a Texas town, preaching in a Methodist building. Two people responded as brother Teddlie sang an "invitation song," but when Wallace interjected further exhortation 20 more came forward to be baptized for the remission of sins, as brother Teddlie sang on and as the Methodist preacher looked on with amazement.

That is Church of Christ history that most of our folk today know nothing about. The "meetings" were held in schools, brush arbors, other churches, and even in the open air, and the preaching persuaded tens of thousands to be baptized into Christ. Our churches today are resting largely on the labors of those old-timers, for our members now are the children and grandchildren of those they baptized. Those days are probably gone forever, but I remember them and in my youth I got in on their passing. Even I, and I am no Foy Wallace or Horace Busby (whom Teddlie named second) preached under arbors and the open air, with as many as eight or ten coming forward at one time to be baptized. Most of our preachers today, for good or bad, know nothing of those days. Maybe it is just as well, but as Teddlie told his stories I was left with the feeling that we have lost the zeal we once had.

And since I had come to have rather negative feelings about Foy Wallace, judging him by the controversies of his latter years, I needed to hear someone talk about him who loved and appreciated him. Brother Teddlie told of the dream he had of brother Wallace in heaven, a man he labored with for many years in the gospel. Foy was singing a song that Teddlie wrote, the one that Foy always wanted him to sing over and over in their revivals, *In Heaven They're Singing.* Teddlie remembered that they sang it at Wallace's funeral.

In heaven they're singing a wonderful song,
A theme that shall never grow old;
And glorified millions are singing it now,
In that beautiful city of gold.
We read of its beauty, but somehow we know,
Its glory has never been told,

But think of the rapturous singing up there
In the beautiful city of gold.

As the dear old brother listened on cassette to that song once more, sung by the Harding College choir, he moved to the edge of his chair and directed it, as if in a revival, gestures and all and through tear-dimmed eyes. He had just spoken of the poverty of most of his years, his hardships and struggles, the death of his wife, and now a nursing home. As he sang in his weakness "In heaven they're singing a wonderful song" with the Harding chorus I was deeply touched.

I asked if he needed help. He has Social Security and money in the bank. He has one son, age 76. His health? "I only have a few days left," he said, as if he might have a song like that. As I walked away I realized more than ever how deep my Church of Christ roots go. I may have a quarrel with my people, but there can be no doubt, in my mind at least, that it is a lover's quarrel.

I tested those roots further when I got home. Ouida's mother, who is my beloved Mother Pitts, has been living with us going on four years now, and she is Church of Christ to the core —and only a decade younger than brother Teddlie. I started the cassette of some of his hymns that I purchased during my visit. When the Harding chorus started singing *Heaven Holds All to Me,* Mother Pitts joined in, somewhat like brother Teddlie did.

Earth holds no treasures but perish with using,
However precious they be;
Yet there's a country to which I am going;
Heaven holds all to me.
Heaven hold all to me,
Brighter its glory will be;
Joy without measure will be my treasure;
Heaven holds all to me.

Then there is *Worthy Art Thou* and *When We Meet in Sweet Communion,* songs sung by our folk around the world.

They may not compare with such hymns as Luther's *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* or Isaac Watts' O *God Our Help In Ages past,* which is probably the greatest hymn ever written, and I never heard them sung when I was at Princeton Seminary. But they are

nonetheless both meaningful and beautiful, and they are *ours*, reflective of genuine Church of Christ piety. Princeton may have the great hymns, and even a non-instrumentalist has to concede that its organ is breathtaking, especially when playing the hymns named above, but their people don't sing like our folks do.

With the glorious Church of Christ heritage we have it is understandable how difficult it is for any of us to leave and become something else, though we can be sympathetic with those who do. The Churches of Christ may have some mid-course corrections to make, but there are those of us who believe they can be made and are being made. —*the Editor.*

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THE CURE FOR LONELINESS

W. Carl Ketcherside

Once I wrote a book and titled it "One Great Chapter." It was one of thirty-two volumes I produced in my writing heyday, a word which means "period of greatest vigor." In it I analyzed chapter eight of that unparalleled treatise in which "the apostle to the Gentiles" wrote his heart out to the Romans. I have often wondered if those in Rome, caught up, as they were, in dreams of politics and of power, really appreciated it as much as I do, almost two thousand years after it was dictated to Tertius. There are many great chapters in the new covenant scriptures. There are no inferior ones. As I begin to write about John 17, I pray it will not reach the proportion of a book. I know you are praying that even harder than myself. But my heart is filled and I cannot promise.

The chapter contains the longest recorded prayer of Jesus. It was not the longest, for sometimes he continued all night in prayer. But it was the longest one preserved for us by the disciple whom he loved. It was uttered just after he had finished speaking to the apostles. They had just told him that at last they were sure of one thing — that he knew all things. He had just remarked that he had come from the Father into the world, and now he would reverse the order and leave the world and go to the Father. What this kind of language does to the theory of the unitarians, I shall leave them to tell you. There were no unitarians when Jesus spoke these words. For your information, there were no trinitarians either.

It was a day when wisdom was elicited by questioning. Ever since the day of Socrates, four hundred years previous, the dialectic method of instruction and investigation by questions and answers had prevailed in many of the schools of thought in the Greek world. But the disciples said it was so apparent and sure that Jesus knew all things, it would have been useless for any man to ask him profound questions to test him. And that fact made them believe that he came forth from God whose "judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." Every human method falls flat on its face when used against God. The fact that Jesus knew all things, and that any man was an ignoramus to question him was enough for his disciples. It ought to be enough for us today as well.

Jesus questioned them "Do you *now* believe?" Then he told them that very soon they would be scattered, everyone to his own home, his own ways, his own thoughts. Jesus would be left alone, bereft of human companionship, or arm to lean upon. But then, almost casually, he gave the prescription for one of the most widespread maladies of our modern sophisticated culture — loneliness. Never before in the history of humanity has there been such loneliness as now exists. And it exacts its due, a frightful personality toll from millions. Jesus pointed out that human companions would fail and leave him *alone*. But he remarked that he was not alone because the Father is with him. Not that he *was* with him, or *would be* with him, but he *is* with him.

That is the cure for loneliness — to have someone with you. I think of an elderly woman in the inner city who wept bitterly as she told me, "I've got a home, I've got plenty to live on, but I've got no one to talk to." I am helping a man who went on a three-day alcoholic binge, and lay on the floor from Christmas Eve for almost three days in a stupor, and who said, "I had no one who loved me or cared for me. I went crazy." Jesus knew he was not alone when men ran away. He said he was not alone because "the Father is with me." That is the best prescription available. We need never walk alone!

Jesus spoke these things to the disciples that they might have peace in him. A lot of good folk are betrayed by their dependence upon their dictionaries. A dictionary is like any other tool. It is not for universal use. One definition it gives of peace is "the absence or cessation of war." But just because a nation is not firing cannons at another is no indication of peace. They may have substituted insults for cannonballs. Our peace is personal. "He is our peace." The peace we have in him is tranquility resulting from reconciliation. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The peace of which Jesus speaks heals, repairs, and makes whole. It is active and not passive. As Shakespeare said of sleep, it "knits up the raveled sleeve of care."

In the world we will have tribulation. Tribulation is from the Latin *tribulum*, a threshing instrument. It refers to a flail which was brought down continuously upon the unresisting grain. There are those who seem to be always under the rod. They hardly rise from one catastrophe until another strikes. This is our fate in the world. In all of this we are told to be of good cheer. Our mood should be one of conquest and not surrender. We do not fight for victory. It has already been won. All we need do is to claim it. "I have overcome the world."

After speaking *these words* Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven. Most of us do not. We close our eyes and bend our heads downward. We would think it strange if one looked upward with eyes open. But it is not the attitude of the head, but that of the heart which counts. It is not the pose or posture of the outer man but it is the petition of the inner man which constitutes prayer. One of the most effective prayers I ever heard was uttered by a man hanging head down two stories up, with his foot caught in a chain dangling from a scaffold. I do not recommend it as a position which all should choose. I am more interested in the words with which Jesus began his prayer, "Father, the hour is come." *—4420 Jamieson, St. Louis, MO 63109.*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Our dear friend and brother, Moto Nomuro, a Japanese minister of Christ, is moving from his home-church near Tokyo, where I visited with him in 1983, to a new, more spacious facility in the mountains 100 miles northwest of Tokyo, which he is naming Bethany Home as a symbol of his concern for the unity of all heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement now working in Japan. The land he sold brought 100 times the price he paid for it back in the 1950's! Talk about inflation or a capital gain!

There are signs of "breaking out" among the black Church of Christ. You may know they like to debate, even with each other, but you would not have supposed such a proposition as this: "That the Church currently known as 'The Church of Christ' (which came out of the Stone/Campbell movement) contains within its membership Christians only but not the only Christians." Two black ministers, both serving Churches of Christ in Florida, are soon to debate this issue. If our black brothers can come to see what should be obvious enough, that *we* in Churches of Christ are not the only Christians, then we should

invite them to Denton (and other parts of Texas) to teach their white sisters and brothers what we should have learned long ago.

There are 30-odd former Church of Christ ministers attending the Richland Hills Church of Christ in the Ft. Worth area. They are now in law or real estate or insurance or what have you, but no longer preaching. Some are divorced, some disenchanted, some have "had it" with trying to be a minister in the Churches of Christ. Whatever this says about the ex-preachers, it speaks volumes about the graciousness of the Richland Hills church, who receives all those that Christ receives, including our rejected ones, the divorced and the ex-preachers, who are sometimes the same. Even a preacher's wife, driven to divorce her husband after half a lifetime of being harassed by legalism, has found refuge at Richland Hills. One difference at Richland Hills, I am told, is that the elders behave more like caring shepherds than like hard-boiled. corporate executives.

In another Church of Christ, which I will not name except to say that it too is in Texas, there is a dear sister who is understandably distressed because the members make her feel that her husband, who recently died, is lost since he was never baptized. The facts are that he was a believer who attended church with his wife and might have been baptized but he supposed that in joining that church that he would be expected to accept some of its hardline doctrines, such as making instrumental music a sin, which he could not conscientiously accept. During her sad ordeal in burying her husband she received little comfort and no reassurance from the very ones who should have been her stay. Since her husband died unbaptized they did not know what to say to her! Someone might have asked those elders if they had ever given any serious thought as to *why* the man was not baptized. Maybe he did not choose to be like them! This superstitious view that many of our folk have about baptism is a source of great anxiety. Do we really believe that people are saved because they are baptized and not saved when they are not baptized? Do we know so little about the grace of God? Yes, of course, baptism is an ordinance commanded of God that has its proper place in becoming a Christian, but it is not the essence of the Christian faith. It is a serious matter when we assume to control God, even by his own ordinances, and presume to judge who is saved and who is not. There are always conditions and circumstances that we know not of. And surely we can offer hope and consolation to a grief-stricken sister whose husband sat beside her in church and died as a *believer,* one who was apparently doing the best he knew how. If we must judge someone, let us judge ourselves for being so void of the grace and mercy of God as to be unattractive to our captive audience.

The October issue of *Paraclete Journal* will include an article from my hand entitled "Essentials for Renewal," which will appear only there. If you would like to subscribe to this new journal the address is 3707 Edgewood Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45211, and the sub

rate is 6.00 for the year. I also had an essay published in *Restoration Proclaimer,* March-May issue of this year, on "Restoration and Reformation." The address is Box 233, Williamsville, IL 62693, and there is no charge. I also did "The Anatomy of a Slogan" for *Mission,* February issue. This fine journal, representing the elitist Church of Christ, more or less, is surely worth the reading. The sub rate is 12.00 a year and the address is 12102 Tanglebriar Cove, Austin, TX 78750.

Journals may be dying during these days of high postal and printing costs, but journals are also being born. The Reformed Church of America and the United Methodist Church will both launch new papers this year. And Don DeWelt and Ralph Small of the Independent Christian Churches are planning to launch a journal that will transcend the confines of "Restoration Movement" churches and will reach out to the entire evangelical world. We will in time be telling you more about this one.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

The attitude of some of our elders, that they are answerable to no one, hardly comports with my studies in recent years of the meaning of *ekklesia* (church). It does not refer to the "called out" as much as to their coming together or "assembly." *Church* is an incorrect translation. The Greek *ekklesia* assembled as a democratic body to appoint their functionaries, who in turn were responsible to the assembly. A different view from the hierarchy of today. —*Waymon D. Miller, Tulsa, OK*

(Waymon has published a very informative study on the role of elders, which is the title, *The Role of Elders in the New Testament Church.* We will send you a copy for 3.95 postpaid. —*Ed.*)

I am appalled that educational institutions among Churches of Christ can hold annual conventions (lectureships), displaying every denomination attribute one could name, and then their speakers get up and say "We are not a denomination." I think they may be as disillusioned as Mary Baker Eddy's followers who in the midst of poverty, disease, and sickness say that these things do not exist. —*Talmadge McNabb, Brown Mills, NJ*

That the Churches of Christ are riding headlong into institutionalism to the extent that the terms "church" and "eldership" are held to be synonymous is strikingly revealed In current suits in the courts of Tennessee, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. —*Norman Parks, Murfreesboro, TN*

I am a veteran in attending the World Convention of Churches of Christ, my first being in Melbourne (Australia) back in the days when they were "preachathons," going day and night. I was at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1960 and shared the program with Perry Gresham who spoke on Alexander Campbell, and who better to tell of the Sage of Bethany. Then I was in Adelaide (South Australia), Honolulu, and Jamaica. —*Gordon Stirling, Victoria, Australia*

(Mr. Stirling is referring to the only convention that makes a serious effort to be an umbrella for all heirs of the Stone-Campbell heritage. For this next convention, to be held in New Zealand in 1988, I serve with him on the executive committee. We will be saying more about this important event, but we would encourage you to consider attending this convention and thus make the trip of a lifetime. This convention is called only every five years. —*Ed.*)

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BOOK NOTES

This is a good time to urge you to read C. S. Lewis, for several of his most important works are available in inexpensive paperbacks: *Miracles* (3.95); *Great Divorce* (3.50); *Screwtape Letters* (3.50); *Mere Christianity (3.50;) Problem of Pain* (3.95); *The Pilgrim's Regress* (3.95); prices postpaid. If you order all six, only 18.50 postpaid.

For only 9.95 postpaid we will send you a copy of *Interpreting Revelation* by Merrill C. Tenney, which continues to be popular with our readers. It is widely accepted as an able and careful treatment of a difficult portion of Scripture.

For those in search of more serious study aids there is now the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel) abridged in one volume. While it abridges nine volumes into one, it preserves the heart of this unparalled source of information. 44.95 postpaid, hardcover, 1356 pages.

Rubel Shelly's *I Just Want to Be a Christian* is challenging the Churches of Christ to have a less sectarian plea and a broader view of brotherhood, and it is not without flak. We can supply it for 10.95 postpaid.

Right out of recent church history is *A Martyr for the Truth,* the story of Jerzy Popietuszko, the priest who gave up his life for his faith in Poland. This book provides insights into the life of the church and the struggle for freedom in that troubled country. 6.95 postpaid.

For a thrilling, easy-to-read account of the church for the first several centuries, we recommend Harry R. Boer's *A Short History of the Early Church.* 6.95 postpaid.

You will be impressed with the bound copies of this journal in matching volumes back to 1977 (earlier ones are no longer available), with colorful dust jackets. *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977) and *The Ancient Order* (1978), single volumes, are 5.95 each. *Blessed Are The Peacemakers* and *With All The Mind (1979*-80) and *Jesus Today* (1981-82), double volumes, are 9.00 each. Prepaid only please. The bound volume for 1983-84, entitled *The Doe of the Dawn,* should be ready by summer.

You can help circulate this journal through our club rate for four or more names (no limit) at 3.00 per year per name. You send us the names and we do the mailing. Bundle rates to one address is the same rate. Some of our most appreciative readers are those who were introduced to the journal by someone else, so why not give this a chance with some of your friends.

If you send us eight subs (counting your own or your renewal) at 3.00 each (total 24.00), we will send you a free copy of *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett, but you have to request the book.

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